

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2012*

**Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

*July 10, 2012*

*The President.* Hello, Cedar Rapids! Oh, it is good to be back in Cedar Rapids!

All right, couple of people I want to acknowledge. First of all, please give Jason and his wife Ali a big round of applause. They are just wonderful people. I'm so glad I had a chance to meet them, and—now, they're debating what to name their son, so if you guys have some suggestions—[*laughter*]. I asked them, what about Barack? [*Laughter*] That was not yet on the list. [*Laughter*] But they are wonderful people, and they've got a incredibly cute guy named Cooper. And so I really thank them for their hospitality, and we appreciate them so much. And Jason is starting as a high school principal, so wish him good luck. He is going to do a great job.

I want to acknowledge Mick Starverich——

*Audience members.* Starcevich.

*The President.* Starverich.

*Audience members.* Starcevich.

*The President.* Starcevich.

*Audience members.* Yay!

*The President.* I call him Mick. [*Laughter*] And he is the president of Kirkwood and our host today. Thank you so much.

I want to acknowledge our outstanding emcee, Peggy Whitworth. Great friend. Great friend of mine. And one of my dearest friends here in Iowa, your outstanding attorney general, Tom Miller, is in the house.

Now, if you guys have a seat, feel free to take a seat. That way, if it gets a little warm, I don't want anybody getting overheated. You guys are kind of out of luck. [*Laughter*] So make sure you're hydrated.

And Abraham Lincoln is in the house! My homeboy from Illinois—[*laughter*]—and an outstanding Republican endorsee. [*Laughter*] There you go.

Now, unless you've managed to hide your television somewhere for the last year, you may be aware that it is now campaign season. [*Laughter*] And here in Iowa it seems like it's always campaign season. You guys can't get away from it. And I know that it is not always pretty to watch. There is more money flooding the system than ever before. There's more negative ads. There's more cynicism. Most of what you hear in terms of the news is who's up or who's down in the polls, instead of how any of this relates to your lives and the country that you love.

So I know that sometimes it can be tempting to lose interest and to lose heart and to get a little cynical. And frankly, that's what a lot of people are betting that you do. But I'm betting that you won't. I'm betting that you are going to be as fired up as you were in 2008, because you understand the stakes for America.

Most of you are here because you know that even though sometimes our politics seems real small and petty, the stakes in this election could not be bigger. What's at stake is bigger

than two candidates, it's bigger than two political parties. What's at stake is two very different visions for our country.

And, Cedar Rapids, the choice that we make that will help determine our direction for years to come, that choice is going to be up to you.

*Audience members.* Obama!

*The President.* That's a good choice.

Now, this will be my last political campaign, no matter what. Got—I got nothing else to run for. [*Laughter*] But it's got—and because of that, you start feeling a little nostalgic and you start thinking about some of your first campaigns. I think about all the places I used to travel in Illinois and the first race I ran as a State senator. And Michelle and I had to, like, xerox or go to Kinko's and copy our little flyers, and we didn't have a TV budget back then. [*Laughter*] And we rode around in my car, and I filled it up with my gas—[*laughter*—and I'm the one who got lost if I took a wrong turn. [*Laughter*]

And what's amazing, though, when I think about it, was how many people you'd meet from every walk of life all across Illinois, in big cities, small towns, upstate, downstate, Quads, you name it, and you'd always hear similar stories from people about their parents or their grandparents and the struggles they had gone through and how they had been able to find a job that paid a living wage and look after their families and their kids had done a little better than they did. And those stories would resonate with me and Michelle because that was our story, that was our lives.

And then when I came to Iowa for the Presidential campaign—first stop, Cedar Rapids—[*applause*—first stop. First stop. Cedar—

*Audience members.* We love you!

*The President.* I love you back.

And the first stop was Cedar Rapids, and then we went on to Waterloo. And I—that was the first time I had campaigned as President, and I was kind of nervous. We had this huge town hall, and I don't remember what I said. [*Laughter*] Most of the time I was just worrying about screwing up. [*Laughter*] But the same thing that I saw in Illinois I was seeing in Iowa. This was a State that gave me a chance when nobody else would.

And no matter what the national media was saying, no matter how far down we were in the polls, we'd come here and Michelle and I, we'd feel hopeful, because we had that same conversation that we had had in my first race as a State senator or my first race as U.S. Senator, going to State fairs and stopping in towns and visiting VFW halls and diners and meeting people whose lives, on the surface, might have looked different than mine, but when you heard their stories, they were a common story.

I thought about my grandparents, whose service in World War II was rewarded—when my grandfather came back from the war and my grandmother worked on a bomber assembly line—and they were able to go to college on the GI bill, buy their first house with an FHA loan.

I had a single mom who, with the help of my grandparents, was able to send my sister and me to great schools even though she didn't make a lot of money. She was struggling to put herself through school and working at the same time. And Michelle would think about her father, who had worked as a stationary engineer at the water filtration plant—blue collar job—

all his life, and her mom, who was a stay-at-home mom and then worked as a secretary for most of her life.

And we thought about how far we had come and the fact that our lives were a testament to that fundamental American ideal that no matter who you are, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, America's a place where you can make it if you try. America's a place where you can make it if you try.

And that same story—my family story, Michelle's family story—I heard it from you guys. It was your story. And we understood. And we'd sit and talk, and we'd agree that America has never been a country of people looking for handouts. We're a nation of workers and dreamers and doers. And we understand that we've got to work for everything that we've got. And all we ask for is that hard work pays off, that responsibility is rewarded, so that if you put in enough effort, if you're willing to put in some sweat and tears and overcome some difficulties in your life, then you can find a job that pays the bills and afford a home that you can call your own and count on health care when you get sick and put away enough to retire on, maybe take a vacation once in a while.

I was telling folks in Ohio the other day, I remember my favorite vacation when I was 11 years old, traveling the country with my grandmother and my mom and my sister. And once in a while we'd rent a car, but a bunch of times we'd just take Greyhound buses. And sometimes we'd take the train and stay at Howard Johnson's. And as long as there was a little puddle of a pool, I'd be happy. *[Laughter]* And you'd go to the ice machine and the vending machine and buy a soda and get the ice, and you were really excited about it. *[Laughter]*

And what was important was just the time that you had to spend with your family. It wasn't anything fancy, but you understood that you could spend time with your family. They were cared for. You had a sense of security. You could provide for your children an education that would allow them to do even better than you did. That was the basic bargain that built America's middle class, the largest middle class on Earth. That's what built our prosperity, the greatest economy the world's ever known.

And so those shared memories, those shared stories—that was the basis of our campaign when I ran for President. That's why I talked about the first time I came to Cedar Rapids, because we came together as Democrats and Independents and Republicans because for too long that basic bargain, that vision of what it means to make it in America, had been slipping away for too many folks. People were working harder for less. It was more difficult to save, more difficult to retire. The cost of health care and college was going through the roof.

And we understood that turning that around was not going to be easy. We knew it would take more than 1 year or one term or maybe even one President. Now, what we didn't know was that we were about to get hit with the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes. And that crisis has put us through some really tough times here in Iowa and all across the country. It robbed millions of our fellow Americans their jobs and their homes and their savings. And it made the American Dream seem even further out of reach for too many hard-working people.

But the basic idea of why I ran in 2008, the reason you're here today, is because that crisis did not change who we are. It did not change our character. It did not change our values. We still know what makes us great. We still know that what makes us great is the fact that if you work hard in this country, you can still make it. That vision we still believe in. The vision of a strong middle class is what we're fighting for.

Our mission right now is not just to recover from a recession. It's to reclaim the basic security that so many Americans have lost. Our goal is to put people back to work, but it's also to build an economy where that work pays off, an economy in which everybody, whether they start a business or they're punching a clock, can have confidence that if you work hard, you can get ahead.

That's what this campaign is about, Iowa. That's what I've been fighting for for the last 3½ years. And that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

Now, you know what's holding us back from meeting this challenge is not a lack of ideas or a lack of solutions. What's holding us back from making even more progress than we've made is a stalemate in Washington between two fundamentally different views about which path we should take as a country. And this election is about breaking that stalemate.

This election will determine our economic future for the next generation. And frankly, the choice could not be clearer. My opponent, his allies in Congress, they sincerely believe that prosperity comes from the top down.

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* They believe that if we spend trillions of dollars more on tax cuts—mostly for the wealthy—that it will somehow create more jobs, even if we have to pay for it by gutting education, chopping assistance to community colleges and Pell grants, cutting back on training—

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.*—raising middle class taxes.

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* They believe that if we roll back regulations that we put in place on banks and insurance companies and oil companies, all meant to protect our people and our economy, that somehow everybody is going to be better off.

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* And I think they're wrong. I think they're wrong.

And listen, listen, it's not just my opinion. We tried it their way through most of the last decade, and it didn't work.

We fought two wars on a credit card; still paying for trillions of dollars in tax cuts that didn't lead to more jobs or better wages for the middle class. And the lack of rules on Wall Street is what allowed people to take shortcuts and game the system in a way that caused this whole mess in the first place. So we tried what they're selling, and it didn't work. And somehow they think you don't remember. [*Laughter*] But you remember, and we don't need more top-down economics.

What we need is somebody who's going to fight every single day to grow the middle class, because that's how our economy grows, from the middle out, from the bottom up, where everybody's got a shot. That's how the economy grows.

So I was over at Jason and Ali's—and wonderful, wonderful story, really nice family. Jason's the new principal over at Central City High. Ali's an account manager at a document scanning company. They've got a very cute 4-year-old, Cooper, and then the yet-to-be-named other cute one. [*Laughter*] They met at a convenience store where they worked while they

were in school. Apparently, Ali was Jason's boss. *[Laughter]* And she is still his boss. *[Laughter]* That does not change. That's how it works. *[Laughter]*

So we were talking about something that nobody looks forward to, and that's paying taxes. Everybody understands it's something you have to do; you don't love doing it. But we were talking about how over the last 4 years, because of policies my administration put in place, we've been able to offer the McLaughlins about \$4,900 in tax relief.

And they said that's made a real difference in their lives. It's helped them pay their bills, helped them get daycare for Cooper. We were sitting and I was telling them the house they're in now is roughly the same size as the house that Michelle and I lived in for the first 13 years that we were married. We had a little co-op. And when they were talking about the bills, I remembered going through them. You got the mortgage. You got the student loans. You got the electricity bill, car note, gas bill, daycare. Everything they were talking about was familiar because Michelle and I went through it. And that \$4,900 helped. It made a difference.

Now we've got a choice to make, because on January 1, taxes are scheduled to go up on everybody in America. That's what the law says right now: If we don't do anything, if Congress doesn't do anything, taxes will go up on everybody at the end of this year.

Yesterday I called on Congress to stop any tax hikes for the 98 percent of Americans who are just like the McLaughlins—just like you. Because if Congress doesn't act, then that tax hike could cost up to \$2,200 for a family of four. That wouldn't just be a big financial hit for Jason and Ali, because as they pointed out—and this is what I love about America and what I love about them—they said, as tight as things may be for us, we're a lot better off than a lot of folks we know. So imagine if it's tough for them what it's going to be for somebody else.

*Audience member.* Like my mom.

*The President.* Like your mom. *[Laughter]*

*Audience member.* That's right.

*The President.* It would be not only a huge blow to those families, it would be a big blow to our entire economy at a time when we need all the help we can get.

Now, I believe that we should make sure that taxes on the 98 percent of Americans don't go up, and then we should let the tax cuts expire for folks like me, for the top 2 percent of Americans.

So anybody making over \$250,000 a year, including me, we'd go back to the tax rates that we were paying under Bill Clinton, which, by the way, was a time when our economy created nearly 23 million new jobs, the biggest budget surplus in history, and created plenty of millionaires to boot.

And by the way, the reason I say that is not because I just love to pay taxes. *[Laughter]* It's because I know I can afford it, and to give me another tax break or to give Warren Buffett another tax break or to give Mitt Romney another tax break——

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.*——that would cost about a trillion dollars, and we can't afford it, not at a time where we're trying to bring down our deficit. Not at a time when we're trying to reduce our debt.

So this has nothing to do with me wanting to punish success. We love folks getting rich. I hope Malia and Sasha go out there and if that's what they want to do, that's great. But I do want to make sure that everybody else gets that chance as well. And for us to give a trillion dollars' worth of tax breaks to folks who don't need it, who—folks who don't need it and aren't even asking for it, that doesn't make sense.

Now, the Republicans in Congress and Mr. Romney disagree with me. And that's what democracy's all about. They want more tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans; on top of the existing Bush tax cuts, they want to give \$5 trillion more in tax cuts.

*Audience member.* No way!

*The President.* And that fight is a big part of what this election's about. We're going to have that debate, here in Iowa and all across the country.

But in the meantime, doesn't it make sense for us to agree to keep taxes low for 98 percent of Americans who are working hard and can't afford a tax hike right now?

I mean, think about it. I want to hold taxes steady for 98 percent of Americans; Republicans say they want to do the same thing. We disagree on the other 2 percent. Well, what do you usually do if you agree on 98 percent and you disagree on 2 percent?

*Audience members.* Compromise!

*The President.* Why don't you compromise to help the middle class? Go ahead and do the 98 percent, and we can keep arguing about the 2 percent. Let's agree when we can agree.

Let's not hold the vast majority of Americans hostage while we debate the merits of another tax cut for the other 2 percent. In other words, let's stand up for families like yours that are working hard every day, give you some certainty so you can start planning, so you have an idea of what's coming next year.

And that's what this election's about. Ultimately, Cedar Rapids, that's why I'm running for a second term as President, because I believe we can make progress right now that helps you and your families. That's what I'm going to be fighting for.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Now, this tax issue is part of a broader debate we're going to have about how we rebuild an economy that grows the middle class and gives opportunity to everybody who is trying to get into the middle class.

When the American auto industry was on the brink of collapse and more than 1 million jobs were on the line, Governor Romney said we should "let Detroit go bankrupt."

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* I refused to turn my back on a great American industry and great American workers. I bet on American workers. I bet on American manufacturing. And 3 years later, the American auto industry has come roaring back. That's what this election's about.

Because what's happening in the auto industry can happen in other industries, and I'm running to make sure it does. I want hi-tech manufacturing to take root in places like Cedar Rapids and Newton and Des Moines. I want goods stamped with "Made in America" selling all around the world. I want to stop giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs and factories overseas and start rewarding companies that create jobs right here in the United States of America.

Now, Governor Romney has experience owning companies that were called "pioneers" in the business of outsourcing. My experience has been working with outstanding members of labor and great managers to save the American auto industry. And as long as I'm President, I will keep fighting to make sure jobs are located here in the United States of America.

But we can't stop there. I'm running to make sure that America once again leads the world in educating our kids, training our workers. Our tuition tax credit has saved millions of families thousands of dollars. I want to extend it. We just won the fight that we were having with Congress to stop the Federal student loan rate from doubling for more than 7 million students. We got that done. Now I want to work with presidents and officials at universities and community colleges to bring the cost of tuition down once and for all.

I want to help our schools hire and reward the best teachers, especially in math and science. I want to give 2 million more Americans the chance to attend great community colleges like Kirkwood, help them learn the skills that local businesses are hiring for right now. Because higher education is not a luxury in the 21st century, it is a necessity, and I want everybody to be able to afford it. That's what this election's about.

My administration has already helped more than a million responsible homeowners refinance their mortgages. Well, I'm running to give more folks like them a chance to refinance and save \$3,000 a year. My opponent's plan is to let the housing market "hit bottom." That's not a solution, that's part of the problem. That's a choice in this election.

I'm running because I believe that nobody in America should go broke just because they get sick. Our health care law was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do. And you know what, I will work with anybody to improve the health care law where we can. But this law is here to stay.

And it will help the vast majority of Americans feel greater security. If you've got health insurance, it's going to be more secure because insurance companies can't jerk you around because of fine print. If you don't have health insurance, we'll help you get it. They're not going to be able to discriminate against you in buying health insurance because you're sick. And we're not going to tell the 6 million young people who have already been helped because they're now on their parent's insurance plan that suddenly they're on their own. And we're not going to turn Medicare into a voucher system.

We're not going to refight political battles from 2 years ago or 3 years ago. We're going to move forward and help every American make sure they feel some security when it comes to health care.

I'm running because after a decade of war, we stopped and ended the war in Iraq, we're transitioning out of Afghanistan, and now it's time to do some nation-building here at home. So I want to take about half the money we're no longer spending on a war, and let's use it to put people back to work rebuilding our roads, rebuilding our runways, our ports, our wireless networks.

I know we got some trades here in the house. These guys, they're ready to work. They're ready to put a hardhat on. They're ready to rebuild America. That's what we need to be doing all across Iowa, all across this country. We can't go back. We got to move forward.

And I am running to make sure that we can afford to pay down our debt and our deficits in a way that is responsible. After a decade of irresponsible decisions, we need to reduce it, but in a balanced, responsible way.

*Audience member.* Make sure you help our vets!

*The President.* I will cut spending that we can't afford——

*Audience member.* Help our vets!

*The President.* ——and—we're going to help our vets. We're doing it. We've actually increased Fundingveterans funding since I've been President higher than any time in 30 years.

The—[*applause*]—but you know, in order to bring down our debt and our deficits in a responsible way, it means cutting out things we can't afford. Not every Government program works. We can streamline Government. I've asked for authority from Congress to make sure that Government is suited for the 21st century, not the 19th century.

But what we've also got to do is ask the wealthiest Americans who enjoyed the biggest tax cuts over the past decade to just pay a little bit more. And, you know, here's the thing. There are plenty of patriotic, successful Americans who want to make this contribution. They're willing to do it because they remember how they got successful.

All these things, whether it's bringing back manufacturing or getting construction workers back on the job or protecting your health care or saving the auto industry or making sure our kids get the best education, making sure our veterans get the care they deserve after fighting on behalf of our freedom—all these things that make up a middle class life, they're all tied together. They're all central to the idea that made this big, diverse, hopeful, optimistic, hard-working country great, the idea that if you work hard, you can have the security to make of your life what you will, the idea that we are all in this together.

We are individuals, and we have to take responsibility, and nobody is going to offer you anything, but ultimately, there are some things we do together. That's the promise of our parents and our grandparents. They passed it down to us. It's the promise we have to pass down to our kids and our grandkids, that we don't just look out for ourselves. We look after other people too in our communities, in our States, in our Nation, and next generation of Americans.

So over the next 4 months, you'll see the other side spending more money than we've ever seen before. And even though there will be a bunch of different ads, they'll all have the same message. They'll all say: The economy is not where it needs to be, and it's Obama's fault. That's basically their idea. They know their economic theory isn't going to sell, so all they can say is, unemployment's still too high, folks are still struggling, and it's Obama's fault. That's their message. That's it. They're—they don't have another one. [*Laughter*] I guarantee you, you watch every ad, that's going to be the message.

Now, that may be a plan to win an election, but it's not a plan to create jobs. It sure as heck is not a plan to grow our economy. It's not a plan to revive our middle class. They don't have that plan. I've got that plan, Iowa.

So let me tell you, we have been outspent before, we've been counted out before. But through every one of my campaigns, what's always given me hope is you, your ability to cut through the nonsense, your ability to identify what's true, to tap into those values that we all believe in.

I know that you guys remember the story of your family just like I remember mine, and all the struggles of our parents and our grandparents and great-grandparents, everything they went through, some of them coming here as immigrants, maybe working in a mine, working in



a mill, farming the land. They didn't know what to expect, but they understood there was something special about this country. They knew that this was a country where people are free to pursue their own dreams, but that we still come together as one American family.

And they knew that being middle class wasn't just about having a certain amount of money in your bank account. It was about the values you cared about and the responsibilities that you took and the communities that you believed in and how you were able to have some security to take care of your family and give your children a better chance than you did.

And when we come together and we tap into those values, when we remember what we're made of and who we are and how we got here and that we didn't get here alone because somebody out there was helping us along the way, then all that money spent on TV advertising doesn't matter. All those negative ads don't happen.

*Audience member.* We're not buying it!

*The President.* That's what I remember. That's what I know about—how you guys not only inspired me, but you inspired each other. And you can still do that. You still inspire me.

When I told you in 2008 that I was running for President, I told you, look, I'm not a perfect man—Michelle tells me that. [Laughter] And I wouldn't be a perfect President. But I promised that I would tell you what I thought, I'd tell you where I stood, and I promised I would work every single day, I would fight as hard as I knew how, for you. Because I saw myself in you. I saw my kids in your kids and my grandparents in your grandparents.

And I've kept that promise, Iowa. I have kept that promise. And I still believe in you. And if you still believe in me and you're willing to stand with me and work with me and knock on doors with me and make phone calls with me, I promise you we will not just win this election, we will finish what we started, and we will remind the world why America is the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:58 p.m. at Kirkwood Community College. In his remarks, he referred to campaign volunteer Peggy Whitworth; Abraham Lincoln impersonator Lance Mack; his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng and mother-in-law Marian Robinson; Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Cedar Rapids, IA.

*Locations:* Cedar Rapids, IA.

*Names:* Buffet, Warren E.; Clinton, William J.; Mack, Lance ; McLaughlin, Alison S.; McLaughlin, Cooper; McLaughlin, Jason K.; Miller, Tom; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Robinson, Marian; Romney, W. Mitt; Soetoro-Ng, Maya ; Starceovich, Mick; Whitworth, Peggy.

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medical care : Health care reforms; Housing : Mortgage refinancing programs; Iowa :  
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